

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

SAJ-01 SAM-01 EB-07 AID-05 /081 W

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R 181157Z APR 75

FM AMZABAYSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8853

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

EUCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 3077

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJECT: FACTORS AFFECTING DEMIREL GOVERNMENT'S
PERFORMANCE AND SURVIVAL

SUMMARY: THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT, WHICH NARROWLY WON A
VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, IS HELD TOGETHER PRIMARILY BY ITS OPPOSITION
TO REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) LEADER ECEVIT AND BY ITS
DESIRE TO USE ITS POSITION IN POWER TO IMPROVE ITS CHANCES IN THE
NEXT ELECTION. ALTHOUGH PARLIAMENTARY ARITHMETIC WORKS IN FAVOR OF
GOVERNMENT SURVIVABILITY, DEMIREL'S PERFORMANCE AS LEADER WILL
PROBABLY BE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE IN DETERMINING HOW WELL THE GOVERN-
MENT FUNCTIONS. THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENTS, INTRA-COALITION
RIVALRY AND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AS WELL AS THE NATURE OF
ECEVIT'S OPPOSITION WILL ALSO AFFECT DEMIREL'S PROSPECTS.

END SUMMARY

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1. THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT, WHICH WON ITS INITIAL PARLIAMENTARY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE BY ONLY FOUR VOTES, HAS UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS OF STABILITY. THE FOLLOWING IS A REVIEW OF THE FORCES WHICH HOLD THE GOVERNMENT TOGETHER AND THE FACTORS THAT COULD BREAK IT UP.

2. BASICALLY, THE FOUR COALITION PARTNERS IN THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT -- THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP), THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), THE REPUBLICAN RELIANCE PARTY (RR) AND THE NATIONAL ACTION PARTY (NAP) -- SEEM UNITED BY THREE PRINCIPAL FACTORS: (A) A DETERMINATION TO PREVENT BULENT ECEVIT'S REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) FROM COMING TO POWER, WHICH THEY AGREE WOULD DAMAGE ALL FOUR PARTIES; (B) CONVERSELY, A DESIRE TO MAINTAIN THEMSELVES IN POWER AS LONG AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THEIR SUPPORTERS' POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY (INCLUDING THE CONTROL OF INFLUENTIAL TURKISH RADIO AND TELEVISION SYSTEM) AND IMPROVE THEIR CHANCES IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS; (C) AGREEMENT ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES (BUT NOT ON ALL).

3. BEYOND THESE BASIC TIES, THE FOUR PARTNERS APPARENTLY HAVE DIFFERING REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS COALITION:

A. A PRIMARY CONCERN OF JP LEADER DEMIREL SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TO REDEEM HIS REPUTATION WHICH WAS DAMAGED BY THE MARCH 12, 1971 "COUP BY MEMORANDUM" AND THEN FURTHER HURT BY THE JP'S POOR SHOWING IN THE 1973 GENERAL ELECTIONS. HAVING REGAINED POWER, DEMIREL NOT ONLY WILL BE ABLE TO PROVE TO HIS CRITICS THAT HIS POLITICAL CAREER IS FAR FROM FINISHED, BUT ALSO WILL BE IN A POSITION TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND INFLUENCE LEGISLATION WHICH COULD IMPROVE THE JP'S CHANCES IN ANY FUTURE ELECTION. THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP ALSO GIVES DEMIREL AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO COUNTER ECEVIT'S POST-CYPRUS HERO IMAGE BY PRODUCING CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

B. NSP LEADER NECMETTIN ERBAKAN WILL HAVE THE CHANCE TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO INCREASE HIS PARTY'S APPEAL TO THE MOSLEM TRADITIONALIST VOTER BY PRESSING FOR TURKEY'S GRADUAL DESECULARIZATION, WHILE SEEKING TO INDUSTRIALIZE THE MORE REMOTE AREAS OF ANATOLIA. MOREOVER, PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT -- AND ESPECIALLY HIS CONTROL OF THE JUSTICE AND INTERIOR MINISTRIES -- PLACES ERBAKAN IN A GOOD POSITION TO THWART POSSIBLE EFFORTS TO

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CLOSE THE NSP FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE PROHIBITIONS AGAINST THE USE OF RELIGION FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

C. THE RR, WHICH FEARS POLITICAL EXTINCTION, EARLIER LOBBIED SUCCESSFULLY TO GAIN ITS COALITION PARTNERS' AGREEMENT TO PRESS FOR A CHANGE IN THE ELECTION LAW TO PERMIT THE FORMATION OF "JOINT LISTS" OF THE COALITION PARTIES' CANDIDATES. THIS CHANGE THEORETICALLY WOULD HELP INSURE THE PARTY'S CONTINUED

EXISTENCE, AT LEAST FOR THE NEAR FUTURE. THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERSHIP ALLOWS RR LEADER FEYZIOGLU A VOICE IN POLICY OUT OF PROPORTION TO HIS PARTY'S POSITION IN PARLIAMENT.

D. THE THIRD DEPUTY PRIME, NAP LEADER ALPASLAN TURKES, WHO VIEWS ECEVIT AND THE RPP AS TOOLS OF THE COMMUNISTS, HAS AN EVEN MORE DISPROPORTIONATE INFLUENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT THAN FEYZIOGLU. WITH ONLY THREE DEPUTIES IN PARLIAMENT, THE NAP HOLDS TWO CABINET POSITIONS.

4. PARLIAMENTARY ARITHMETIC CURRENTLY WORKS IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH DEMIREL'S COALITION DOES NOT CONTROL A MAJORITY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, NEITHER DOES THE OPPOSITION, AND THE GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY BE BROUGHT DOWN BY A MINIMUM OF 226 VOTES. WHILE THE OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) HAS VOTED WITH THE RPP AGAINST THE NATIONALIST FRONT, IT HAS ALSO, SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY, DECLARED THAT IT WOULD SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S "STRUGGLE AGAINST COMMUNISM."

5. DEMIREL'S PERFORMANCE AS LEADER OF THE COALITION PROBABLY WILL BE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE IN DETERMINING HOW WELL THE GOVERNMENT WILL FUNCTION. HE FACES A MAJOR DAY-TO-DAY JOB OF PRESERVING HARMONY AND PREVENTING INTRA-COALITION FEUDING. DEMIREL IS WELL AWARE OF THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THE MILITARY AND THE DISRUPTIVE POTENTIAL OF TURKES' COMMANDOS. ECEVIT'S RECENT STATEMENT THAT THE RPP WOULD HOLD DEMIREL ACCOUNTABLE FOR ALL OPERATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT (AS OPPOSED TO ITS CONSTITUENT PARTY CHIEFS) MAY ALSO HELP ASSURE THAT DEMIREL DOES NOT LET CIVIL VIOLENCE BECOME THE PROBLEM THAT IT WAS BEFORE THE MILITARY UNSEATED HIM IN 1971. HE HAS GIVEN SOME INITIAL INDICATIONS OF DYNAMISM BY ANNOUNCING A 30-DAY PROGRAM OF HIGH-PRIORITY ACTIONS. AS NOTED EARLIER, HE NO DOUBT HOPES FOR TANGIBLE SUCCESSES IN COPING WITH TURKEY'S MAJOR INTERNATIONAL
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AND DOMESTIC PROBLEMS.

6. DEMIREL, HOWEVER, MUST RELY ON THE INDEPENDENTS TO ENACT HIS PROGRAM SINCE THEY SUPPLY THE NECESSARY MARGIN TO OVERCOME THE RPP-DP OPPOSITION. THIS GROUP PROVIDED THE MARGIN OF VICTORY IN THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AND SHOULD, IN THE MAIN BE WILLING TO CONTINUE ITS SUPPORT SINCE MOST OF ITS ADHERENTS ARE RECENT TRANSFEREES FROM THE DP AND ARE ANTI-RPP. (WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE RR AS A PARTY GROUP, THE INDEPENDENTS' SUPPORT WILL BECOME EVEN MORE CRUCIAL SINCE SOME PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES MAY COME UNDER OPPOSITION CONTROL.) JP SUPPORTERS ARE CONFIDENT THAT MOST OF THE INDEPENDENTS WILL JOIN THE JP, AND THAT STILL MORE DEFECTIONS FROM THE DP WILL OCCUR.

7. AMONG THE FACTORS THREATENING THE STABILITY OF THE COALITION ARE:

A. THE PERSONAL RIVALRIES AMONG THE PARTICIPATING PARTY LEADERS. DEMIREL AND ERBAKAN HAVE BEEN RIVALS SINCE THEIR STUDENT DAYS AT ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY. FEYZIOGLU, WHO VIEWED HIMSELF AS THE LEGITIMATE SUCCESSOR TO INONU, LEFT THE RPP WHEN HE WAS UNABLE TO ACCEPT ITS LEFT-OF-CENTER ORIENTATION UNDER ECEVIT. HE NOW FINDS HIMSELF A PARTNER OF DEMIREL (WHO CLAIMS THE MANTLE OF MENDERES) AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE OLD DEMOCRAT PARTY, AS WELL AS THE ANTI-ATATURKIST ERBAKAN. TURKES, AS A LEADER OF THE 1960 REVOLUTION WHICH OVERTHREW MENDERES, ALSO MAKES AN UNLIKELY PARTNER FOR DEMIREL.

B. THE PARTNERS' DISPARATE VIEWS, RANGING FROM CENTRIST TO FAR RIGHT, FIND EXPRESSION IN THEIR DIFFERING APPROACHES TO (1) CONTINUED WESTERNIZATION (DEMIREL AND FEYZIOGLU PRO, ERBAKAN AND TURKES CON); (2) INVESTMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY (TURKES AND FEYZIOGLU MORE STATE INTERVENTIONIST, DEMIREL AND ERBAKAN MORE "BIG BUSINESS" ORIENTED); (3) TURKISH ADHERENCE TO EEC (FAVORED BY DEMIREL AND FEYZIOGLU, OPPOSED BY TURKES AND ERBAKAN; AND (4) FLEXIBILITY ON CYPRUS AND AEGEAN ISSUES (TURKES AND ERBAKAN HARDLINE).

C. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OPPOSITION. BY SKILLFUL PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING THE RPP-DP OPPOSITION COULD EXPLOIT IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NATIONALIST FRONT COALITION PARTNERS. IN THIS MANNER THE OPPOSITION MIGHT BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ABLE TO FORCE DEMIREL TO DEVOTE HIS ENERGIES PRIMARILY TO KEEPING THE COALITION TOGETHER, THUS LIMITING HIS CAPACITY TO GOVERN EFFECTIVELY.

8. THE SURVIVABILITY OF THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT THUS APPEARS TO HINGE ON DEMIREL'S ABILITY TO CONTROL HIS SOMEWHAT INCOMPATIBLE PARTNERS, RETAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE INDEPENDENTS, RESTRAIN CIVIL VIOLENCE AND SUCCEED IN COPING WITH TURKEY'S INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. DEMIREL CLEARLY IS STRONGLY MOTIVATED AND IS AN ABLE AND ASTUTE POLITICIAN; YET THE PROBLEMS HE FACES IN MANAGING A POTENTIALLY UNSTABLE GOVERNMENT AT A CRITICAL TIME MAY PROVE TO BE GREATER THAN HIS CAPABILITIES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ANKARA03077
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750137-0053
From: ANKARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750435/aaaabgor.tel
Line Count: 214
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FACTORS AFFECTING DEMIREL GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE AND SURVIVAL
TAGS: PINT, TU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006